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Vancouver metr

Your essential daily news | MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2015 | High 6°C/Low 3°C Cloudy

STAR WARS BLASTS BOX OFFICE RECORD
metroLIFE

SNOW CHANCE

The prospect of a White Christmas is slim, forecaster warns
metroNEWS

As is now tradition at Whistler Blackcomb resort, the first 100 skiers and snowboarders who showed up decked out in Christmas costumes received free lift passes for the day.
COURTESY JAMES CATTANACH/COAST MOUNTAIN PHOTOGRAPHY

Plan for driverless cars needed: Mayor

TECHNOLOGY

Prediction in response to Uber question

Emily Jackson
Metro | Vancouver

British Columbians may be clamouring for Uber, but Vancouver's mayor says cities should be thinking about a technology that will disrupt traditional transportation industries even more: driverless electric cars.

"Driverless electric cars are coming sooner than we might think and they will completely transform cars in cities," Mayor Gregor Robertson said in a year-end interview with Metro.

"We need to think of (Uber) in the context that driverless cars are the next technology."

Robertson made the comments about the futuristic vehicles when asked why he, a mayor who tries to cultivate a tech-friendly image, isn't embracing Uber, despite more than 50,000 people signing an online petition in support of the ride-sharing service. (Robertson called for the removal of the Trump brand from a Vancouver tower, citing an online petition signed by 50,000 people as one of his reasons to take action.)

He said it's not about one company but about improving overall service in a city where fewer people drive or own cars. Other options include transit, car sharing, taxi services such as eCab and new limo-taxi hybrid Ripe Rides.

"There's no doubt we need reforms and improvement, but we have to make sure it's a level playing field," he said, pointing to accessibility, insurance, green standards and training.

He noted that Uber, along with Google, Apple and major car companies, is a major investor in driverless-car technology.

"They're all pouring enormous R&D budgets into that," he said, which indicates the technology could soon be in the mix.

> **Driverless electric cars are coming sooner than we might think.**
> Mayor Gregor Robertson

Meantime, Robertson said, he expects the province to take the lead on Uber, which has presented challenges for cities around the world. (Robertson has used it once in New York on a friend's account.)

Council recently approved 58 temporary taxi licences to ease the surge in demand over the holiday season, but that is just a short-term solution, Robertson said. "We want to make sure decisions with Uber and the taxi industry are thoughtful for years ahead."

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metro NEWS 4M
Your essential daily news
Monday, December 21, 2015

Numbers tell harrowing tale of Syrian refugees.
WORLD

Dogs about to get more freedom within the city

RECREATION

Park board developing pooch-friendly strategies

Emily Jackson
Metro | Vancouver

Vancouver is going to the dogs.

A rise in the city's urban dog population — and the resulting competition for off-leash dog space amid increased density — inspired the park board to create a new "Dogs in Parks Strategy" to govern how pooches use park space.

The city is seeking a consultant to evaluate existing off-leash dog parks, analyze data to recommend where new off-leash areas are needed and develop "fresh" branding and signage for the dog-friendly parks.

As it stands, the city has 36 off-leash areas, six fenced and three on beaches.

The city wants the consultant to estimate the number of dogs in the city (licensed and unlicensed) and map out where they live, along with any complaints to 311 or the police department.

Based on the distribution, the consultant will recommend where new off-leash parks should be created, how they should be designed and when they should be implemented.

A dog plays at the off-leash park at Hadden Park in Kitsilano. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO

36

The number of off-leash areas currently in Vancouver.

This will include a communications strategy to let dog owners and residents know what's going on in their parks.

The consultant must also come up with a consultation plan to include stakeholders including dog associations and general park users in the decision-making process. This is sure to spark some drama, based on the passionate pleas from hundreds of dog owners who in 2014 protested the city's plan to reduce the off-leash dog area at Trout Lake.

Two thousand people also signed an online petition for the city to dump off-leash time restrictions at Hadden Park, also known as the Kits Dog Beach.

The city will not reveal how much the budget is for the consultant because it's a competitive bidding process. But the 2015 to 2018 capital budget allocated $2.25 million to activity features including dog parks, cemetery improvements, golf course improvements and Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Gardens renewal.

IN BRIEF

Pharmacy robbed, fentanyl alert goes out

Vancouver police are warning drug users about the potential for accidental overdoses after the theft of various drugs including fentanyl, in a pharmacy robbery.

Police say a gun was used.

Health officials are concerned about the risks of people using fentanyl. The synthetic narcotic is 50 to 100 times more toxic than other opioids. Early signs of a fentanyl overdose include severe sleepiness, trouble breathing, cold, clammy skin and trouble walking or talking. Call 911 immediately if overdose symptoms start.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Man found dead but no risk to citizens: Police

Homicide investigators believe there is no risk to the public after a man was found dead inside a vehicle in Maple Ridge Saturday around 4 a.m.

The Integrated Homicide Investigation Team isn't releasing much information about the death of a 33-year-old Pitt Meadows man in order to protect the integrity of the investigation.

Police continue to explore possible leads into his death, according to a Sunday statement.

The man was not known to police, nor does his death appear to be connected to crimes in other jurisdictions, police say.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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HOUSING COMPLEX

Dozens displaced after downtown fire

Dozens of people were displaced Saturday by a two-alarm fire in a downtown Vancouver social-housing complex.

The blaze broke out at about 1:30 p.m. on the top floor of the Regal Place Hotel at 144 West Hastings St., which provides housing to people trying to overcome substance dependency.

Portland Hotel Society housing director Andy Bond said the building was fully evacuated, displacing 38 people, adding that staff quickly set up cots, food and coffee at the nearby Woodward's Building.

"Overall, people are getting anxious to get back in," he said on Saturday afternoon. "We have a nice warm place where people are getting some food and coffee."

The society, which manages the building, has found accommodations for all those affected within its housing network.

He said when the fire broke out a staff member ran through the building, banging on all the doors to make sure everyone left quickly. Bond said it wasn't clear how many people were inside at the time, but no one was injured.

"I'm just really happy that everybody is OK, and really thankful that (the staff member) was here and able to make sure that people got out safely, because it was a serious fire."

Vancouver Fire Deputy Chief Tyler Moore confirmed no one was hurt. One unit had extensive fire damage and the entire floor where the fire broke out had fire and water damage, he said.

He said thirty-seven Vancouver Fire staff members raced to the scene as flames and smoke billowed from the building on Saturday afternoon.

> **Overall, people are getting anxious to get back in.**
> Andy Bond

Moore said crews made entry and knocked down the fire before conducting overhaul and a secondary search of the building.

He said the blaze was designated as a two-alarm fire because of its location at the top of a high building and the resources required to tackle it.

He said investigators were working with the Vancouver Police to determine the cause of the fire. THE CANADIAN PRESS

IN BRIEF

Avian-flu response gets $300,000 funding boost

The federal and British Columbia governments are investing $300,000 to step up avian-flu surveillance, early detection and response efforts.

The B.C. Agriculture Ministry says the funding will enhance its Animal Health Centre in Abbotsford with specialized equipment to test sediment samples from ponds and wetlands used by waterfowl.

The ministry says it will also target owners of small poultry flocks by hosting workshops in different regions, focusing on poultry health. The funding will also support a rapid response to any future outbreaks with mobile equipment to help with the humane depopulation of infected flocks.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

A cyclist walks her bike along Adanac Street to avoid a steep hill in January 2013. This year, Environment Canada is predicting a high temperature of 4 C and a low of -1 C for Christmas Day, with a 20 per cent chance of snow. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO FILE

Odds are against a white Christmas

WEATHER

B.C. Lottery allowing bets on which city will have snow

Matt Kieltyka
Metro | Vancouver

Are you dreaming of a white Christmas payday?

The B.C. Lottery Corporation is letting people put their money where their forecasting skills are by allowing PlayNow.com users to bet on which city they feel will see a dusting of snow on Dec. 25.

Vancouver currently has 7-4 odds, meaning a $10 bet would win a return of $27.50 if snow is reported at the weather station at Vancouver International Airport on Friday.

20%
The likelihood of snow falling in Vancouver on Christmas Day

However, Environment Canada meteorologist Michel Gelinas said he personally wouldn't take the bet.

"Christmas Day is looking pretty dry right now," said Gelinas. "Chances of a white Christmas are pretty small right now, at about 20 per cent."

Thursday the 24th is more likely to yield some wet snow, but mostly showers, according to the forecaster.

As of Sunday, Environment Canada is predicting a high of 4 C on Friday, with temperatures falling to a low of -1 C overnight.

History isn't on the side of a white Christmas, either.

According to Environment Canada, there have only been four days since 1955 where Vancouver experienced a "Perfect Christmas" — when there is at least two centimetres of snow on the ground in the morning and snowfall at some point during the day.

The average chance of snow during that period is just 10 per cent.

That's not to say Vancouverites will be hard pressed to find snow during the holidays.

Local ski hills have seen plenty of snow to date, and Gelinas says the chances of a white Christmas at those altitudes are much better.

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REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

Metro Vancouver to move headquarters

Emily Jackson
Metro | Vancouver

Metro Vancouver's regional government plans to move to an expensive new headquarters in Metrotown.

The organization announced it will relocate to Metrotower III, a 29-storey LEED Platinum tower purchased for $205 million from Ivanhoé Cambridge, because it's the "most economically and environmentally responsible decision," Metro Vancouver board chairman Greg Moore said late last week.

The tower has more than 414,000 square feet of space and is next to the SkyTrain, which the board hopes will reduce the need for people to drive.

The regional body argues it also has more predictable revenues from future tenants and lower operating and maintenance costs.

Metro Vancouver will sell its existing offices at 4330 Kingsway and 5945 Kathleen Ave. in Burnaby. It hopes to get about $82.5 million from the sale, which will go toward the cost of the new head office.

It argues the move will have little financial impact — between $5 and $6 annually per household for the next 13 years — compared to the millions to upgrade the aging offices.

Staff will move within 13 months.

Cheetah still at large

PUBLIC SAFETY

Authorities trying to locate exotic big cat

A cheetah on the loose in British Columbia's Interior is still unaccounted for after it was last spotted roaming a snowy highway in the Kootenay region last week.

As of Sunday evening, conservation officers were still urging people to phone in any sightings of the big cat.

RCMP notified the public on Thursday that the feline had been seen wandering near Crawford Bay, about 50 kilometres northeast of Nelson in the Kootenays.

"It's pretty much status quo," said the Environment Ministry's Danielle Bell, speaking on behalf of the B.C. Conservation Officer Service. "We've gotten some public tips and are following up on those."

The B.C. government approached the Calgary Zoo late last week asking whether the facility would be willing to house a cheetah, said zoo spokeswoman Trish Exton-Parder.

"We've got the expertise to care for them and the veterinary care to make sure they're safe and happy," said Exton-Parder.

Calgary doesn't have any cheetahs of its own, but Exton-Parder said such an animal could be held comfortably in a temporary quarantine.

Exton-Parder referenced the numerous offers of assistance the Calgary facility received in the aftermath of the 2013 Alberta floods.

Creston RCMP released this photo of an adult cheetah that was spotted along Highway 3a Thursday afternoon in the Crawford Bay and Kootenay Bay areas of the province.
THE CANADIAN PRESS/CRESTON RCMP HANDOUT

"That's how accredited zoos help each other out," she said. Currently, Vancouver's zoo holds the only permit to possess a cheetah in B.C., according to a statement from the Forests Ministry.

The statement said the ministry had received a permit application to possess a cheetah in the Kootenay region and that application is currently under review.

"However, ministry staff advise there is no indication or information as to whether the cheetah on loose is or could be related to the above permit application," the statement said.

> **It could be hungry, and any animal that is hungry may do things that may not be in its character.**
> Insp. Joe Caravetta, Conservation Officer Service

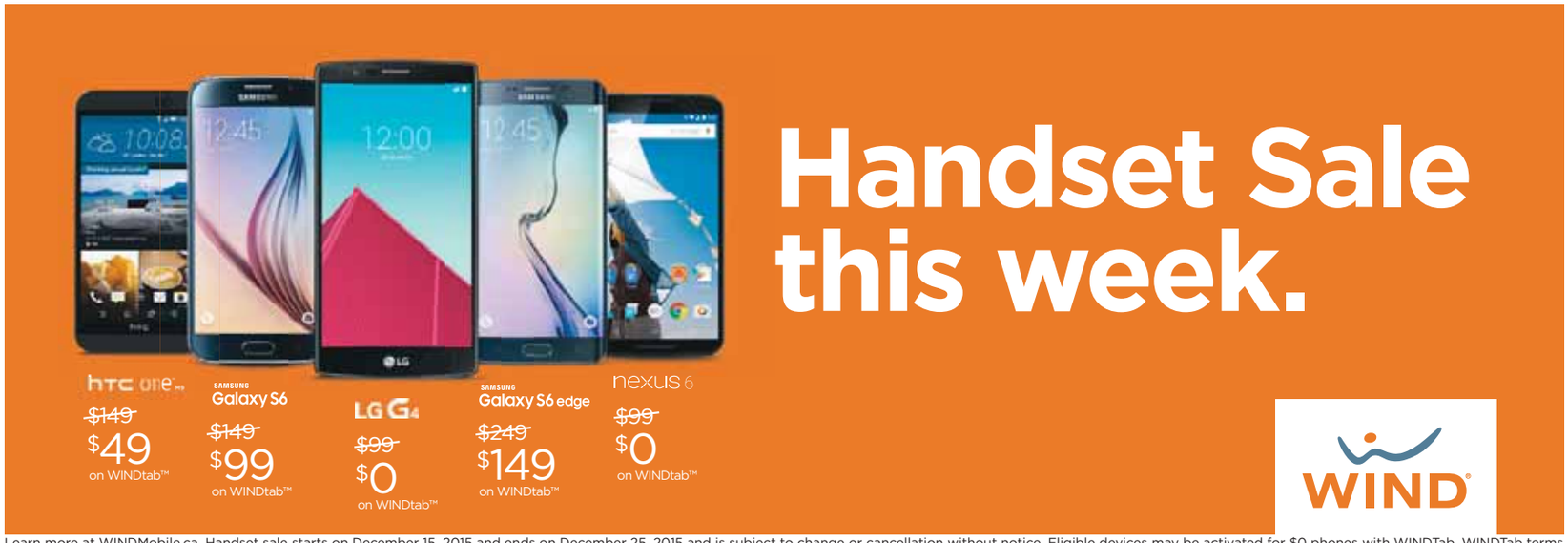
Insp. Joe Caravetta of the Conservation Officer Service said last week that the provincial wildlife veterinarian doesn't believe the missing cheetah poses a threat to the public.

"We want to be able to find this cheetah and for its own health and benefit be able to capture it and get it to a facility and have it checked out," Caravetta said on Friday.

"It could be hungry, and any animal that is hungry may do things that may not be in its character."

The RCMP are encouraging people to keep an eye on small children and pets until the animal is located.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



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RCMP investigates Victoria police boss

ALLEGATIONS

Chief Elsner volunteers to 'step aside'

Victoria's police chief has stepped aside after an investigation into his social-media conduct with the wife of one of his officers escalated into allegations of breach of trust and discreditable conduct.

B.C.'s police complaint commissioner Stan Lowe announced Friday that RCMP Chief Supt. Sean Burrie will lead two Police Act investigations into eight allegations against Chief Const. Frank Elsner.

Once the investigations are complete, retired judges Carol Baird Ellan and Ian Pitfield will decide whether the chief's actions were misconduct, said Lowe.

Shortly after the announcement, Elsner told the Victoria and Esquimalt Police Board he will voluntarily leave his post, pending the results of the investigations due in June, said Esquimalt Mayor Barb Desjardins who serves as the board's co-chairwoman.

"The chief conveyed the message to us by email that he voluntarily wants to step aside for the best of the department, for the best of the (police) board and for the best of all concerned until this investigation is done," said Desjardins.

Desjardins said Deputy Chief Del Manak will become acting chief and Elsner will remain on paid leave.

Elsner could not be immediately reached for comment.

"It's tragic," Desjardins said. "I know the community is concerned. I know there are members of that police department who are hurting."

She said the police board is preparing to call a meeting as early as Monday to review the issue. When asked why the police board backed the chief when the allegations initially arose, Desjardins said, "There in no way was this a cover-up."

On Dec. 6, Elsner apologized, saying he was "truly sorry and humiliated," after a police-board investigation found Twitter messages he'd sent to another officer's wife were inappropriate.

Lowe's report contains allegations that Elsner provided misleading information to an investigator and contacted a witness during an internal investigation, including the officer whose wife the chief had messaged over Twitter. Elsner allegedly provided the officer with information that convinced him no further investigation into the matter was required, said the report.

The member's wife is reportedly a police officer in a neighbouring jurisdiction.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Esquimalt Mayor and police board co-chairwoman Barb Desjardins. THE CANADIAN PRESS

> **The climate within the department appears to be in a state of tension and dissonance.**
> Stan Lowe, B.C.'s police complaint commissioner

WILDLIFE VANCOUVER AQUARIUM RESCUES SEAL PUP
Seal pup Maëlle — named after local snowboarder and Olympic gold medalist Maëlle Ricker — is healing from major neck wounds suffered from being tangled in netting. Although underweight, the pup has a good prognosis, according to Vancouver Aquarium head veterinarian Dr. Martin Haulena. Maëlle, who is about five or six months old, will be released when she gains weight. A volunteer wildlife rescue helicopter pilot had found the pup on Dec. 16. VANCOUVER AQUARIUM

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IN BRIEF

Defence minister visits Iraq, reports say

Canada's defence minister is visiting Iraq, just days after Canadian military forces helped push back a major Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) offensive on Thursday.

Kurdish media reported that Harjit Sajjan spent Sunday in the town of Irbil meeting with Kurdish officials.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

INFRASTRUCTURE

Cities to tame expressways

It was a mid-century effort to launch Vancouver into the modern age — an elevated roadway made up of tonnes of concrete cutting through the city's shiny downtown core to serve the almighty automobile.

The failed attempt ultimately became a saving grace.

After the colossal Georgia Viaduct was built in 1972, a grassroots uproar stopped the construction of what would have been a multi-lane expressway.

The City of Vancouver voted last month to tear down the twinned bridge while discussion continues over construction of a new street network below it.

Other Canadian cities, such as Halifax and Toronto, are also contending with their own white elephants of infrastructure — vestiges of the freeway-building craze in vogue during the 1960s and 1970s that inspired public uprisings.

Vancouver's former chief planner Brent Toderian said that as cities such as Vancouver re-imagine their downtown spaces, they face "possibly the most powerful city-making moments in the Canadian urban landscape."

"These opportunities are too important to squander with even an average result," he said. "It starts with tearing them down." THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Government House in St. John's. CONTRIBUTED

Victoria's Government House CONTRIBUTED

Gov.-Gen. David Johnston at La Citadelle. CONTRIBUTED

Stornoway COLOURPIX.COM/ TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Take up residence

HERITAGE

The stories behind some of Canada's historic homes

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's first post-election decision was to leave 24 Sussex Drive vacant so that the aging official residence in Ottawa can undergo critical renovations.

It's a historic home — all the more so because Trudeau grew up there and will likely move back in before the end of his four-year term. But it is just one of the nation's official residences, each of which holds pieces of Canada's heritage.

1 Government House
St. John's
One of the oldest official residences in Canada, the two-storey red sandstone building was built for Sir Thomas Cochrane, as a condition of his appointment as Governor of Newfoundland. Government House has served as the home of the province's lieutenant governor since the province became a part of Canada in 1949. It cost $746,800 to run in 2013-14.
SOURCE: 2014 NEWFOUNDLAND BUDGET

2 Government House
Victoria, B.C.
The current building opened in 1959 after fires destroyed the two previous residences of the province's lieutenant governors in 1899 and 1957. The estate has served as the home of the Queen's representative since B.C. joined confederation in 1871. Total annual cost last year was $1.328 million.
SOURCE: 2014 ANNUAL STATEMENT OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

3 La Citadelle
Quebec City
Few of Canada's official residences better embody the occupant's official symbolic function than La Citadelle, the star-shaped military fortress built between 1820 and 1832. Costs for 2014 to 2015 totalled $746,122.
SOURCE: PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES CANADA

4 Stornoway
Ottawa
The official residence of the Leader of the Official Opposition, Stornoway was built in 1913. During the Second World War when it served as the home of the Dutch heir to the throne, Princess Juliana and her family, who went into exile after the Nazi invasion of 1940. Stornoway was taken over by the federal government in 1970 and has annual costs of $54,715.
SOURCE: NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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jeans for men

SAVE UP TO 65%

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INDIA

Protesters decry release of gang rapist

A man convicted as a juvenile in the fatal 2012 gang rape of a young woman aboard a moving bus in India's capital ended his three-year term in a reform home Sunday, as angry protesters demanded that he remain in detention.

The man was short of his 18th birthday when he and five others brutally attacked the 23-year-old woman in a case that shocked India.

Several activists and politicians have demanded that he not be released until it can be proven that he has been reformed.

On Friday, the Delhi High Court rejected a petition to extend the man's term. The man was moved Sunday from the reform home where he had been kept to a new home under the care of a children's rights group.

In December of 2012, the woman and a male friend were returning home from seeing a movie when they were tricked by the attackers into getting on the bus, which the men had taken out for a joyride.

The attackers beat the victim's friend and raped her. They penetrated her with a rod, leaving severe injuries that led to her death two weeks later.

The case ignited a debate about whether minors who commit especially horrific crimes should be tried as adults. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Students shout slogans in protest against the juvenile's release. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Passengers who were on board the Air France plane forced to land in Mombasa, Kenya, react after they were officially informed of the bomb scare. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bomb scare grounds jet

SAFETY

Fourth hoax in recent weeks for Air France

A fake explosive rigged with cardboard, sheets of paper and a household timer forced an Air France flight carrying 459 passengers and 14 crew members into an emergency landing in Kenya on Sunday, sending passengers down emergency slides in what the airline's CEO said was the fourth bomb hoax against the airline in recent weeks.

The Boeing 777 was heading to Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris from the island of Mauritius when its pilots requested an emergency landing early Sunday at Kenya's coastal city of Mombasa.

The homemade apparatus was discovered at midnight hidden in a washroom cabinet where it was placed during the approximately 11-hour flight, said the airline's CEO, Frederic Gagey.

He congratulated the crew for their cool-headed reaction. Passengers were also impressed.

"They keep everybody calm. We did not know what was happening," said Benoit Lucchini.

Six passengers were being questioned, including the person who informed the crew about the device, said a Kenyan police official.

Gagey decried the hoaxes.

> **We find this behaviour stupid, damaging and unacceptable.**
> Frederic Gagey, Air France CEO

"This is behaviour that for me is criminal. It sows doubt, it disrupts our operations, it inconveniences passengers, and obviously each time we can get information about those who are responsible for these extremely bad jokes, pardon the expression, we file a legal complaint," Gagey said. "We find this behaviour stupid, damaging and unacceptable." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Spain's ruling party wins
An exit poll projects that Spain's ruling Popular Party has won the general election but is shy of the votes it needs for a majority. A poll for the state-owned RTVE channel gave the Popular Party 26.8 per cent of the vote. Turnout was 58.4 per cent. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Southern China landslide leaves 27 people missing
A landslide at an industrial park in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen on Sunday buried buildings and left 27 people missing, authorities said. Seven people were rescued, but 21 men and six women were unaccounted for. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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COQUITLAM
- Coquitlam Centre

CRANBROOK
- First Pro Cranbrook

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- Dawson Mall

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- Scottsdale Centre
- Sunshine Village

FORT ST. JOHN
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- Totem Mall

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- Aberdeen Mall
- Lansdowne Village

KELOWNA
- Dilworth Shopping Centre
- Orchard Park

LANGLEY
- Willowbrook Corner
- Willowbrook Shopping Centre

MAPLE RIDGE
- Haney Place Mall

NANAIMO
- Country Club Centre
- Woodgrove Centre

NEW WESTMINSTER
- Queensborough Landing

PENTICTON
- Peachtree Square

PITT MEADOWS
- Meadowtown Centre

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- Pine Centre Mall

RICHMOND
- Aberdeen Centre
- Richmond Centre

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- 8363 128th St.
- Central City Shopping Centre
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- Guildford Town Centre
- Panorama Village
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- 698 West Broadway
- 2154 West 4th Ave.
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- 1588 West Broadway
- 1008 West Georgia St.
- Capilano Mall
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The rising flow of Syrian refugees

With hundreds of thousands killed, millions internally displaced and millions more fleeing war-torn Syria, the mounting refugee crisis has been called the largest in recent history. But who is most likely to flee their home country? And where are they going instead? The numbers tell a harrowing tale.

METRO

IN NUMBERS

Syrian refugees

4,390,439

European applications

Between 2011 and 2015

807,337

applications were filed

Serbia and Germany received

57%

of applications

Sweden, Hungary, Austria, Netherlands and Bulgaria received

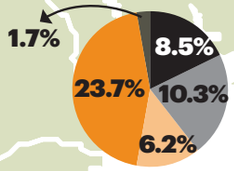
31%

of applications

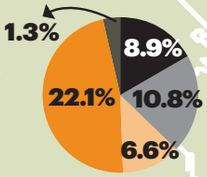
DEMOGRAPHICS

0-4 | 5-11 | 12-17 | 18-59 | 60+

Female refugees (50.3%)



Male refugees (49.7%)



SOURCE: UNHCR.ORG

IMMIGRATION

Canada taking in twice the number of refugees

Canada's minister of immigration and citizenship says the country's resettlement program for Syrian refugees could double its intake by the end of next year to 50,000.

John McCallum was in the Jordanian capital of Amman on Sunday, meeting with Syrian families preparing to board flights to Canada. He told one family: "Everyone in Canada is waiting to meet you."

Canada's new Liberal government is pushing forward with its pledge to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of February. McCallum says Canada hopes to settle 35,000 to 50,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2016, with the UN refugee agency, the Jordanian government and the International Organization for Migration assisting with the vetting process.

McCallum also toured development projects and refugee facilities during his two-day stop in Jordan. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

> **Everyone in Canada is waiting to meet you.**
> John McCallum to a Syrian family

Canadian Minister of Immigration John McCallum speaks with a Syrian family inside their tent, during his visit to a refugee camp in the southern town of Ghaziyeh on Friday. BILAL HUSSEIN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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LAS VEGAS STRIP

Death, injury as car plows into pedestrians

Police and emergency crews respond to the scene of a car accident in Las Vegas on Sunday. JOHN LOCHER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Las Vegas police say one person was killed after a car crashed into pedestrians on a sidewalk Sunday night on the Las Vegas Strip.

Lt. Peter Boffelli says the vehicle was in the northbound lanes of Las Vegas Boulevard near Bellagio Way when the vehicle drove up onto the sideway in front of the Paris Hotel & Casino and struck pedestrians, including 37 people who were taken to hospital.

One person was killed, seven were in critical condition, 26 suffered other injuries and four were treated and released.

"This is a huge tragedy that has happened on our Strip," Boffelli said.

Boffelli also said a counter-terrorism unit was at the scene but a motive has not been determined.

"(It's) unknown if it's an intentional act or impairment act," he said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOLIDAY TRADITION LOBSTER EXPORTS TO EUROPE PLUNGE Live lobsters are packed at the Maine Lobster Outlet in York, Maine, for shipment to Europe where they are a Christmas tradition in several countries. But a strong U.S. dollar and a less-than-festive economy overseas mean fewer lobsters are making it onto European tables. Lobster's status as a luxury item, coupled with rising prices because of competition from Chinese importers and a weak euro, is motivating some consumers to stay away — even if they can afford it. ROBERT F. BUKATY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Growth is top of list

FINANCE MINISTERS

Morneau to discuss Liberal promises at Ottawa talks

Provincial and territorial finance ministers, meeting in Ottawa with federal counterpart Bill Morneau, hope to come away with a better understanding of the government's election promises, which touch on a broad range of issues likely to impact the provinces.

The agenda includes Liberal promises of public-pension reform, infrastructure spending and a revamped child-benefit plan. But with the country's economy struggling to rebound from the negative effects of low commodity prices, there's an overarching theme Morneau says he would like to focus on.

"The main subject I'd like to talk about is growth," he said recently when asked about the meeting.

"We will be spending time talking about infrastructure and how we can best make infrastructure investments together with the provinces. And as I said, we're going to talk about Canada Pension Plan enhancement and how we might be able to work together in that regard."

The Liberals also pledged to provide billions of dollars worth of funding for the provinces, territories and municipalities for infrastructure projects such as public transit. The party argues that such investments are crucial to firing up Canada's weakened economy and to creating jobs.

While it may not appear on the official agenda, Morneau is expected to field questions about health care and the need to grapple with its mounting costs. THE CANADIAN PRESS

IN BRIEF

Income-tax rules changing for some

The tax rules are changing in 2016, and even if many Canadians don't make enough to be hit by the new top federal income tax rate, their financial plans are going to need to be reviewed.

The vast majority of Canadians will not be affected by the new tax bracket for income over $200,000 a year, but everyone will see their tax-free savings account contribution limit be reduced back to $5,500 for 2016. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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metro VIEWS

Your essential daily news

Monday, December 21, 2015

That's barking
A new biophysics study explains why dogs can't drink without making a mess (it has to do with the surface area of their tongues).

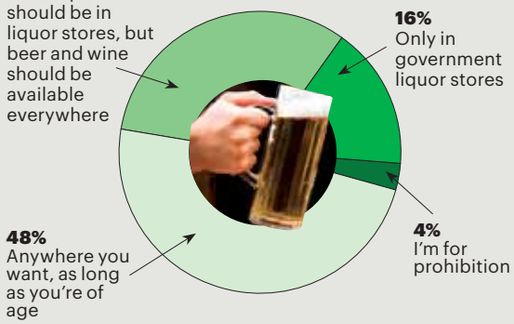
Metro MONDAY POLL

Liberalizing liquor

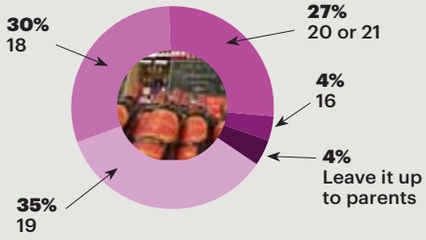
Visit metronews.ca **every Friday to have your say.**

In the past week, Ontario took a few cautious steps towards liberalizing alcohol sales in the province; allowing beer to be sold in select grocery stores. But worries about the effect of alcohol on public morals have persisted for a century or more, and the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union has expressed concerns that easily available beer and wine will increase violence against women. We asked our readers from all provinces if they want to be able to buy alcohol anywhere, or if they're for temperance or even T-total prohibition.

1 Where should you be allowed to buy alcohol?


32%
Hard liquor should be in liquor stores, but beer and wine should be available everywhere
16%
Only in government liquor stores
4%
I'm for prohibition
48%
Anywhere you want, as long as you're of age

2 What should the drinking age be?



3 What are your concerns about alcohol being sold in commercial stores?

32% It will be easier for minors to get alcohol
15% It will reduce tax revenue
15% It will be hard for people who are trying to stay sober
10% It will increase violence or crime
28% Other

It should be sold wherever it can be, but I am in favour of stricter warning labels about the health effects.

The system works well already. Why the need for change?

If teenagers want booze, they'll get booze. We did!

The store could be accountable for giving alcohol to someone who is underage or already inebriated.

WE ASKED Metro readers

Transit fare deposits aren't fair to the poor

CITY HOLLER
Trish Kelly

December marks the end of paper monthly passes for the Translink system. As of January, monthly users will have to load a Compass Card to benefit from the usual monthly pass savings.

A person living on social assistance has $21 per week to spend on food. The $16 for their first Compass Card will have to come from somewhere.

In preparation for this switch, this week, I purchased my first Compass Card from a fare machine at the Main Street Skytrain. It was at the fare machine that I learned for the first time that I would need to pay a $6 deposit on a Compass Card. I also learned I had to load at least $10 on to the card, for a total of $16 out of my pocket just to get ready to pay for a single fare.

The $6 is not meant as a deposit on the Compass Card itself; it's intended to cover instances when a transit user travels father than the balance of the card can afford. In the current system, if I, the transit rider, pay a one zone fare and then find myself in zone two territory, it's up to me to make a decision to get off the train and pay up, or evade upgrading the fare and keep going. True, Transit Police could pop on my train and check my fare, but the only other risk I face if I don't upgrade is my own guilty conscience.

But the Compass Card won't leave open the option of a personal moral quandary. When the transit rider taps out, the fare is calculated, and if there isn't a balance on the card, the add fare will be deducted from the $6 deposit.

It's a better system for Translink, but it's going to be hard for low-income riders of our public transit system. Low-income seniors and people receiving disability assistance from the province will continue to qualify for the low cost B.C. Bus Pass Program.

But for residents who are working poor, or on regular social assistance, they'll have to suck up the $6 deposit.

Local advocacy group Raise the Rates runs an annual campaign called the Welfare Food Challenge, to point out that after monthly expenses and housing costs, a person living on the social assistance rate of $610 per month, has about $21 per week to spend on food. The week such a person buys their first Compass Card, the $16 will have to come from somewhere. Likely this will mean cutting down on the food they will buy. For families who would need to spend that $16 per family member, the problem compounds.

Translink and the province shouldn't be allowed to plan a public transit system that won't work for those with lowest income.

Trish Kelly lives and writes in East Vancouver. Follow her @trishkellyc

metroview

The remedy for Christmas heartbreak is Christmas itself

Michael Coren
For Metro

In a handful of anticipation-soaked days, those of who are Christian will celebrate the birth of the Son of God. Whether it was in a stable and precisely when it happened is not the point. No, the first issue is that for those of who believe, the birth of Christ changed everything. The second is what should that mean for those who aren't Christian?

It breaks my heart that Christians are so often perceived — entirely understandably — not as followers of the Prince of Peace and He who personified love but as angry reactionaries obsessed with right-wing politics and obscure issues rather than with spreading joy.

Breaks my heart when I see Republican candidates, most of them insisting they are devout Christians, boasting how many bombs they will drop, how many people they will kill and dismissing child casualties as collateral damage.

Breaks my heart when I see Canadian Christians shouting hysterically about abortion, spreading falsehoods about vitally necessary sex education curricula and opposing gay equality. By the way, some of the finest Christians I have ever met have been gay, because they have felt the sting of persecution.

They have shared in Christ's torment.

Breaks my heart when I hear extreme Christian leaders arguing that refugees should be blocked from entering North America, claiming that social justice and redistribution of wealth have nothing to do with the faith or demanding less gun control and more expenditure on the military.

If it breaks this pathetic heart, what does it do to He whose birth we are about to remember, and who demanded that we turn the other cheek, love our enemy and embrace our oppressor?

Jesus turned the world upside down. In defeat is victory, in poverty is wealth, in suffering is contentment and in humility is glory. His words were so transforming that they make the manifestos of the secular revolutionaries appear placid and passive.

For the non-Christian, Christmas is a time to reboot, relax, embrace family, perhaps consider what you believe — or don't believe — through the prism of this winter festival. Whatever your religion or lack of it, the sense of goodwill is impossible to avoid, and that's sparkling in its rarity. For me, however, I will bend the knee, pray thanks and ask forgiveness. My heart may be broken, but there is one who can fix it. For all of us. Merry Christmas.

Whatever your religion or lack of it, the sense of goodwill is impossible to avoid.

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metro LIFE

Your essential daily news

Real Housewives' star Teresa Giudice to be freed from prison before Christmas

The funny thing about disease is ...

PODCAST

Haligonians tackle stigma with humour

Jeremie Saunders has the kind of rock hard abs gym rats would kill for.

He doesn't work out.

"It's because I cough so much," said Saunders, who lives with cystic fibrosis. "There's all these perks to CF. It's the worst disease. It's so awful. It's such a bummer. But. ... I have a really killer six pack."

It's this ability to see the positive in a brutal illness that has made Saunders and his two buddies, Taylor MacGillivary and Brian Stever, the popular hosts of a boundary-pushing new podcast, called Sickboy. Episodes take on the sentiment of Saunders' own devil-may-care approach to sickness as the Halifax trio tackle everything from anorexia to cancer to PTSD. They post one episode a week featuring interviews with subjects who alternate between bursts of laughter and heartfelt confessions.

"We're just kind of exploring and looking for the humour in an otherwise dark situation," said Saunders, a 27-year-old actor and yoga teacher, in a phone interview. "What we are laughing at is the absurdity of illness."

And they don't sugarcoat it.

The first episode details one of Saunders most embarrassing experiences as a teen.

"I remember coming in to do this barium enema and I've got the most gorgeous doctor," he recalls. "I was like oh my God this is amazing… until she pulls out this giant tube with a balloon attached to it. And then she has to stick that thing up my butt."

Brian Stever, left, Jeremie Saunders and Taylor MacGillivary are the hosts of the Sickboy Podcast. Saunders has cystic fibrosis and put together a show that takes a lighthearted approach to talking about the disease. TIM KROCHAK/FOR TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

He goes on to detail the unfortunate experience of walking to the washroom with fluid leaking from his anus… all the while he and his co-hosts laugh uncontrollably.

Today, Saunders calls this humour his "therapy." But he hasn't always been so eager to open up. As a teen, he was ashamed of the disease that gave him uncontrollable coughing fits and forced him to take pills every time he ate. He felt weird and acted out by refusing to take his medication — a move that sometimes landed him in the hospital.

> **We don't have the same comfort level with illness as we do with other social topics. People panic.**
> Andrew Henderson, Sickboy Podcast guest

Coupled with that was a number hanging over his head. Doctors told his parents he wouldn't live to see 25. Today, the median age for Canadians living with CF is around 50. The podcast has risen from small potato beginnings. They recorded the first podcast in a Halifax library on a whim back in June and launched a Kickstarter campaign that netted $13,000, helping them build a recording studio at Stever's home. Sickboy garnered 25,000 downloads in 90 days and was named one of iTunes best of 2015 Canadian podcasts.

One of their guests was Andrew Henderson, a 27-year-old who lives with lymphoblastic lymphoma.

"You rarely hear this young voice… talking about illness in a fun, positive way," said Henderson, who brought a bottle of champagne to the Toronto interview. "I just want a pamphlet that says, 'Live your f—ing life. Go to the club, party.'"

Henderson has the same blunt, humorous approach to disease as the Sickboy guys do.

When he stops joking about cancer, it wins, he said. But he also understands the podcast might be hard for otherwise healthy people to listen to.

"We don't have the same comfort level with illness as we do with other social topics. People panic," Henderson says, thinking of the times he shared his diagnosis with friends. "What I got a lot of the time was pity, which is really isolating."

That fear around conversations about illness is exactly what Saunders, MacGillivary and Stever hope to tear down. It's the reason why they don't sidestep personal questions, censor swearing or edit out the numerous male genitalia jokes.

"We want to eliminate the awkwardness and discomfort that sometimes comes with speaking about illness. It just adds to stigma and shame and embarrassment," Saunders says.

They respect that not everyone who's sick is going to be ready to joke — and they're adamant that they recognize the seriousness of disease — but they see more benefit in tackling tough issues with infectious laughter than they do in avoiding talking about sensitive subjects.

Indeed, healthcare experts say there are measurable benefits to adopting a positive attitude, both physiologically and psychologically. People who have positive emotions tend to have lower blood pressure, less stress and better sleep, experts say.

And if that attitude seems entirely out of reach for someone who's sick, "change it up," advises Saunders. Read a different book, listen to different music or watch a new TV show — it's better than the alternative, he said.

"You can choose to be taken down and dragged down because of your circumstances and that's a really easy route," Saunders said. "But there's something so much more liberating in trying to find the humour in that dark situation."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

MANITOBA

Recent snow could be enough to save endangered butterfly

Scientists are hoping Manitoba's recent heavy snowfall could hold off what they feared might be the final blow to one of Canada's most endangered animals.

Last week's dump that left 19 centimetres of white stuff on the southern grasslands may have provided enough of a fluffy blanket for the butterfly to get through the winter.

"That definitely alleviates some of the stress," said Cary Hamel of the Nature Conservancy of Canada. "That snow is one of the major reasons they can survive over our very harsh winters. Without it, we're nervous."

Skipperlings — an unassuming, orange-and-brown butterfly the size of a loonie — once fluttered widely over the tall grass prairie of southern Manitoba and the central United States. It was so common that surveyors wouldn't bother to count it as they tracked the fate of other butterflies.

Then, something happened.

"Since 2001, it's just been blinking out at site after site after site," said Hamel.

"Five, six, seven years later they still haven't seen it. And in some of the sites where they're hanging on, they're only seeing one or two or three or 10."

A survey this year found only about three dozen adult skipperlings in Manitoba, and not so very many more in the U.S.

What's going on?

"We don't know," Hamel said.

"Lots of people are working on the sites where they're still hanging on, trying to figure out what the commonalities are and what's going on with the sites where they've disappeared."

Despite its former abundance, little is known about the skipperling.

"We know that it only exists in high-quality native tall grass prairie," Hamel said. "We know it really likes black-eyed Susans."

Scientists do know that skipperlings spend the winter as caterpillars, huddled among grass stems and leaf trash on the prairie floor. Snow is thought to be their only protection against cold temperatures and dry winds.

Hamel acknowledges experts may be wrong about the skipperling's need for a blanket of white. But given how many other bugs survive the winter that way, it seems likely.

Until a few days ago, that blanket was thin and patchy. The lucky snowfall is a reminder of how precarious is the skipperling's hold on life.

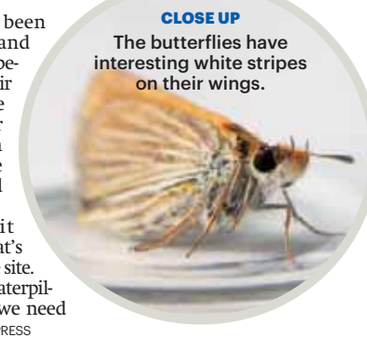
Skipperlings have been around a long time and have seen dry winters before. But Hamel said their low numbers and the distance between their sites have made them so vulnerable that one catastrophic event could wipe them out.

"If none make it through the winter, that's it. They're gone from the site.

"Every one of these caterpillars counts now. And we need them all." THE CANADIAN PRESS

CLOSE UP

The butterflies have interesting white stripes on their wings.



When retail therapy becomes addiction

SHOP TILL YOU DROP

Some brains hard-wired for the ka-ching, research shows

Lisa Monks would shop mostly when she felt lonely. "It filled that void," she says. Instead of sitting at home alone and miserable, she would hit the malls and chat up friendly sales clerks. "It was an escape from reality," she says. Finding that perfect outfit that made her feel pretty would make her euphoric. "I'd be excited and couldn't wait to wear it," the 49-year-old says. "I became addicted to the feeling."

But the bliss of buying didn't last for long. "There was buyer's remorse when I came home and looked at all the dresses in my closet. I'd feel guilty," Monks says.

Shopping addiction is a serious problem in North America, according to consumer psychologist Scott Rick at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business. Some psychologists estimate the condition occurs in 6 per cent of the population — and it's probably on the rise, affecting slightly more women than men, he says.

"It's never been easier to shop," he says.

Online stores are always open. People shop on their mobile phones while on the GO Train. And those 1-800 numbers are always beckoning … not to mention the sales.

Luckily, scientists are beginning to decode the disorder. The brains of compulsive shoppers are wired differently than most people's, says neuroscientist Joseph Ciorciari, acting director of the Brain and Psychological Sciences Department of Swinburne University of Technology in Australia.

In a study published last year, Ciorciari and colleagues attached compulsive buyers and normal consumers to brain scanning (EEG) machines while they "shopped" for virtual items.

The study shows that compulsive shopping can't be dismissed as innocent "retail therapy." The brains of shopping addicts are wired for the hunt. "They always want to have this feel-good sentiment," says Ciorciari. And that constant craving is a hallmark of addiction.

MAXED OUT

Lisa Monks' life spiralled downhill with each new purchase. "The harder I try and nothing is working, the more I feel I deserve to have nice stuff," she says.

Lisa Monks is a shopaholic who has worked past her retail addiction. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

He found that the pleasure pathways in the brain lit up when they made purchases. The feel-good chemical dopamine, which is released in these reward circuits in response to good sex or a tasty meal, counteracts sadness and gives you the illusion of control when you're feeling lost.

The problem is that the excitement of buying doesn't last. Shoppers experience withdrawal symptoms just like any other addicts. Within minutes of spending, they regret their purchases. "This drives even more compulsive behaviour," says Samuel Waldner, an addictions counsellor in private practice in Toronto. Eventually this repetitive destructive pattern can lead to bankruptcy, broken relationships, and even suicide, he says.

Monks maxed out the "insanely high" limit on her credit card. She alienated her boyfriend, who disapproved of the buying. It wasn't until her father died and she had to help her aging mother pay off her mortgage that reality set in. Monks realized she needed help.

Therapists treating shopping addiction focus clients' awareness on the toll of purchases. Waldner helps clients stop spending by giving them lists of their behaviour's bad effects that they can pull out when temptation strikes.

He encourages clients to throw themselves into gratifying artistic pursuits — painting, writing or photography — as substitutes.

Monks realized she'd have to find creative alternatives to feel good. She began reading books, worked out until she was exhausted and spent more time hanging out with her friends. She wrote a book about relationships, and has recently landed a blog on the Huffington Post.

While she still occasionally splurges on a dress, these lapses are only momentary. "Shopping doesn't make me happy," she says. "It's a good feeling when you've done something positive and you're working towards a goal," says Monks.

Best of all, she's out of debt and has faith in the future. "For the first time I feel like I have hope," she says.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Don't expect too much too soon in terms of everyone spending holiday time together, a family mediator says. ISTOCK

Post-split, the best gift for kids is a peaceful holiday

FAMILY TIME

Co-parenting to minimize stress, max out love for kids

This is the first holiday season since Danielle Bileski-Leonard and her husband separated. But she and her ex — who have taken a co-operative approach during a difficult period — aren't squabbling over the big day.

"We want to keep our Christmas morning tradition intact even though our children now float between two households. This means that my ex-husband will join me and our three boys early Christmas morning to open gifts and enjoy one another's company," says Bileski-Leonard.

But even though the two are co-parenting well together, it's still a big emotional adjustment.

"There are moments I feel sadness when I consider that this holiday season just won't have the same warmth and joy as past Christmases now that our family is no longer intact," she says. "That's when I have to remind myself that our kids still experience the same love they did before my husband and I separated. It is out of this love that we can build new traditions, shed the past and embrace a bright new future."

Psychotherapist Kelly Flannigan-Bos says because the holidays are steeped in expectation even at the best of times, managing those is particularly tricky if a marriage has just ended.

"If you're used to being together as a family unit on those days, the thought of not being with your child on Christmas Eve or on Hanukkah can be really devastating or stressful," she say. "You may not want to give it up at all. But probably the other parent doesn't either."

If the relationship with your ex is quite tense or acrimonious, you're going to have to decide what you can let go of for the sake of the kids. "What actually needs to be fought over and what is getting your anger out over another issue?"

Flannigan-Bos says it may be more enjoyable to celebrate on the 20th with no stress than in a tense, time-pressed way on the 25th.

Family mediator Rosanna Breitman says it's important to be sensitive to the fact that the first post-separation holiday can be much more difficult for some family members than others. "Don't expect too much too soon in terms of everyone spending holiday time together," Breitman says.

"If the kids will be dividing their time between their parents' homes, it's essential to manage expectations and logistics in advance," she says. This includes deciding who will have the kids on which days, when transitions occur and whose responsibility the transitions will be.

"Make sure the kids are aware of the plans in advance so that they aren't feeling anxious about where they will be at any given time," Breitman adds.

"Remember that the greatest gift you can give your kids is that of a peaceful and worry-free holiday. Be respectful towards one another, don't start fights in front of the children and don't put the other parent down or use the kids as go-betweens," says Breitman. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

ME TIME

Breitman recommends that parents plan enjoyable activities for the times when they're not going to be with the kids. "Give yourself permission to have fun and enjoy some adult time without guilt, sadness or jealousy of the fun the kids are having without you."

Flannigan-Bos adds that it's important to have someone to talk to leading up to and during the season, such as a supportive friend or a therapist. "Then it's just a matter of taking it moment by moment, breathing, letting go and thinking before you speak."

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ADVICE

Three tips for nailing any presentation

Raquel Laneri
Metro | New York

Sharing one's personal narrative isn't just a way to entertain a group of strangers and friends; it's also a vital skill. Whether you're pitching a business idea to would-be investors, a freelancer going to a networking party or a college senior writing a cover letter for their first job, being able to tell an engaging, personal story will help you stand out from the pack.

As co-founder of the education program for The Moth (a New York-based storytelling group), Micaela Blei knows how to get the best stories out of even the most reticent individuals. The former teacher and two-time GrandSLAM champion currently coaches New York City adolescents to open up about their lives in front of strangers, teachers, parents and, perhaps most terrifyingly, their peers. And, to great success, too.

If you tell the audience what you're feeling, they will be on your side and root for you.
Micaela Blei, The Moth

"We've seen our students take their Moth stories and do exciting things with them," she says. "A few have taken the transcript of their story and edited it into a college essay. And one student took audio of her story and made it into a film that she later submitted to the Tribeca Film Festival — and won."

We asked Blei for her tips on how to tell a great story.

Talk it out

When giving a presentation it's important to sound natural. You want to draw people in, communicate with them, and the best way to do that isn't by writing a speech and memorizing it.

"Sharing a story as yourself isn't performing a monologue," says Blei. Instead, try to tell your story into a tape recorder — or in front of a friend — and refine it from there. "Make a bullet point list of what's going to happen so you can stay on track, but don't write out the whole thing." (Blei recommends saying your story when writing personal essays too, to help give them that intimate feel.)

Be vulnerable

Listeners respond to those with whom they can empathize, so don't try to masque your insecurities or faults. Be honest in your story of course, but also if you're feeling nervous, or if you trip up, admit as much, or make a joke about it.

"It's okay to be scared: It's a scary thing you're doing," says Blei. "And if you tell the audience what you're feeling, they will be on your side and root for you."

End with a bang

You definitely want to start strong, of course, but you should leave your audience pumped up, inspired and on a strong note.

"You don't have to tie your story up with a perfect little bow," says Blei. "But, you don't want to peter out. Follow your bullet points so you don't lose sight of your conclusion."

When it comes to debt, income doesn't matter

PERSONAL FINANCE

Money issues arise when you spend more than you make

Gail Vaz-Oxlade
For Metro Canada

Having a great income doesn't guarantee that you'll have no money problems. You've heard me say this before: It doesn't matter how much you make; if you're spending more money than you bring in, you're headed for disaster.

Let's take the example of Alex and Sam who both have great jobs, two beautiful kids and a nice home. Yup, they have it all. But Alex and Sam suffer an ailment common to lots of hard-working, high-earning couples: It's the We-Make-Lotsa-Money-So-We-Don't-Have-To-Worry Syndrome!

It was the WMLMSWDHTW Syndrome that had Alex and Sam move out of a perfectly good home into a much bigger home than they needed or could afford. When they saw how much equity they'd built up, it seemed like a good idea to use that equity to leverage themselves into a bigger home. Bam — Sam's job disappeared, so a minute later they were moving again, downsizing to get their housing costs back in line. The result: They eroded most of their equity with all their sales costs and they ended up with less house than they started.

It was also the WMLMSWDHTW Syndrome that had Alex and Sam guestimating their expenses. After all, if you make more money than you can imagine spending, why do a budget at all? You can just wing it, right? Wrong! That's how Alex and Sam ended up spending four-and-a-half times what they thought they were spending on food.

Unless you learn to budget, you're fooling yourself if you think making more will make your debt disappear. ISTOCK

People often operate under the fallacy that bad things can't happen to good people. That's the only explanation for why they don't have emergency funds. So when Sam was out of work for almost six months, they were totally unprepared for the drop in their income and ended up using a line of credit to fill the gap. When Sam got back to work, paying down the huge line they'd racked up became the next stress in their relationship.

You aren't rich until you've converted that equity into cash.

People have an obsession with their equity as if it's worth anything at all. "Equity" is only a word. It only becomes "money" if you downsize from a home that's pretty much paid off to a home that's valued at a lot less. Otherwise, equity is just an opportunity for borrowing. Great for lenders; not so great for people who have to pay the interest on all that money they've borrowed. So get over feeling "rich" because you have equity. You aren't rich until you've converted that equity into cash.

And for heaven's sake, stop thinking of your home as a source of credit. Your focus should be on working hard to get rid of your mortgage, not finding new ways to make more debt. Today, if you haven't already done so, talk to your lender about switching to a weekly accelerated-pay mortgage. You'll end up making one extra monthly payment a year that goes directly to pay off your principal. On a $100,000 mortgage at seven per cent, that extra monthly payment will save you $24,000 in interest.

For more money advice, visit Gail's website at gailvazoxlade.com

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BACKLASH

Commenters shame breastfeeding mother

An Ontario woman behind the viral photograph of herself breastfeeding her child while sitting on Santa's lap says she's disappointed with the public reception it's received.

Rebecca Dunbar says she had the picture taken mostly as a joke, but decided to post it in a bid to increase acceptance of the practice of nursing in public. But she says about 75 per cent of the feedback she's seen has been negative, with many posters complaining the picture is "trashy." She says she resents the fact that women can be made to feel shame for pursuing an activity meant to promote the health of their children.

"I just want it to be so normal that it doesn't even need a discussion," the 40-year-old mother of three said in a telephone interview.

The snapshot came about spontaneously. Dunbar took her kids to the local mall to see Santa, and while standing in line one of her one-year-old twins became fussy. Dunbar began nursing. She then came up with the notion of capturing the moment while sitting on Santa's lap to raise awareness.

Dunbar and son with Santa. FACEBOOK

"I asked the photographer if he'd be OK taking the picture and he said, '... if it was OK with Santa,'" she said. "Santa said, 'It's been 40 years and never had a question like that, but why not.'"

So Dunbar posed while nursing her child, then posted the photo to social media with the caption "All I want for Christmas is a healthy, happy baby."

She said her friends have responded enthusiastically on social media and media outlets have begun picking up the image, but said she'll likely have to modify her Facebook settings to deal with negative blowback.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

JOHANNA SCHNELLER **WHAT I'M WATCHING**

Jonesing for Jessica's soul

THE SHOW: Jessica Jones (Netflix) Season 1 Episode 2
THE MOMENT: The Smile

Krysten Ritter as the eponymous Jessica Jones and Mike Colter as Luke Cage. CONTRIBUTED

Secret superhero-turned-private eye Jessica Jones (Krysten Ritter) has a confession to make. She's been sleeping with her handsome neighbourhood bartender, Luke Cage (Mike Colter). But tonight she has to tell him the truth: She's also been tailing him for a client. They face one another in his dimly lit bar.

"So the night you came to my place, that was part of this job?" he asks, angry and hurt.

"I shouldn't have done that," she replies, looking at him steadily.

"Because it's messed up? Or because you got caught?" he asks.

"Both," she answers.

"Get out of here," he growls. "Stay the hell away from me."

She wants to say more. But she turns on her heel and goes.

Ritter's delivery of that single syllable, "Both," is an example of what makes her, and this show, so terrific. She says it with a small smile. It's just a flash, but it communicates volumes: She's embarrassed and sheepish. She's trying to appear tough. She likes him, and she likes him for asking the question. But if you blink, you miss it all.

Part of the joy of watching a hard-boiled character is catching the tiny moments when she cracks and let you in, and Ritter is a genius at that.

Jessica's superpowers don't make her invulnerable; they simply mean we don't have to worry about her body as she prowls the back alleys of New York's gritty Hell's Kitchen. But we worry about her soul, because Ritter makes us want to.

Johanna Schneller is a media connoisseur who zeroes in on pop-culture moments. She appears Monday through Thursday.

RECORD BREAKERS

Latest Star Wars a Force at box office

To say that the force is strong with this one isn't nearly enough.

Studio estimates on Sunday say Star Wars: The Force Awakens brought in a galactic $238 million over the weekend, making it the biggest North American debut of all time.

$120.5 M

Estimated amount the Walt Disney Co. said Star Wars: The Force Awakens made from Thursday night previews and opening day Friday.

The Walt Disney Co. earnings destroy the previous opening record set by Jurassic World, which drew $208.8 million this summer.

A few other movies tried to compete against J.J. Abrams' seventh chapter in George Lucas' space saga.

Almost a galaxy away, the animated Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Road Chip came in second with $14.4 million

In third place, Tina Fey and Amy Poehler's comedy Sisters earned an estimated $13.42 million. A whopping 79 per cent of audiences were female for the R-rated comedy. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Force Awakens sets an opening day record. CONTRIBUTED

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A Murdoch Christmas mystery

CBC

Brendan Coyle embroiled in a murder on holiday special

When he's not watching Frasier in the mornings, Brendan Coyle can often be found catching an episode or two of CBC's Murdoch Mysteries at home in England.

Coyle is best known to Downton Abbey fans as the long-suffering but honourable valet Mr. Bates.

"I just started watching it," said Coyle, sitting in an armchair on the Scarborough set of Murdoch Mysteries, where he was filming the show's two-hour Christmas special (Monday, 8 p.m. on CBC). "I really enjoyed the show. So when they sent me the script, I thought it was epic."

In Murdoch Mysteries' first ever holiday special, Coyle — who has worked in Toronto twice before, in Irish drama The Weir and TV series 12 Monkeys — plays Mr. Rankin, originally from Edinburgh, who has moved to Toronto and becomes embroiled in a murder.

Actor Brendan Coyle poses for pictures on the set of Murdoch Mysteries. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

In formal dress of wing-tipped shirt and black tie, Coyle, 51, doesn't look all that different from his Downton Abbey character.

"I guess I didn't need much of a costume change," laughed Coyle. "It's certainly a similar period and a similar costume. And there is a slight similarity between my character Mr. Rankin, who also works for a wealthy family, and Mr. Bates. But they are very different people, it turns out."

"He's seemingly at first a very internal, stoic man. Not unlike Bates," says Coyle. "But Rankin is a different beast altogether. I really think they pulled out all the stops on this one."

A Merry Murdoch Christmas starts when a philanthropist is found dead just before the holidays. And the presents he gives to orphans in Toronto have vanished.

"It's a Christmas tale, so it's about good triumphing over evil where someone is trying to destroy Christmas, and Murdoch and his gang are trying to save it," said Peter Mitchell, writer and executive producer of the Toronto-based production. "Having Brendan here is great because so many Downton fans are also Murdoch fans, so there is a lot of crossover. And you have a star who is translatable on both sides of the ocean."

The popular show is in its ninth season. It is based on the novels of Maureen Jennings and features 1890s Toronto detective William Murdoch (Yannick Bisson).

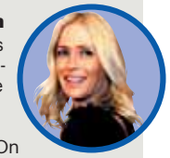
After 132 episodes, it remains one of the most popular shows on the CBC with a viewing audience of 1.3 million weekly. It is licensed in 110 countries, including the U.S., U.K., China and Finland.

"Over the years it's become a fairly multi-generational audience, not unlike that of Anne of Green Gables," said Mitchell. "The whole family watches it, so the appeal of Victoriana and Christmas was a natural progression of the show."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

OTHER GUESTS

Ed Asner
TV legend Asner (The Mary Tyler Moore Show) plays a man who thinks he's Santa Claus. When a philanthropist is found dead, the missing loot is given out by his character. The famously grumpy Lou Grant as Santa? Bring it on.



Kelly Rowan
Rowan plays Millicent McGowan, wife of entrepreneur Alister McGowan. On Christmas Eve, Murdoch attends a party at McGowan's mansion when the presents go missing.

Peter Mansbridge
Maybe it's not that surprising to see the face of Canada's public broadcaster make an appearance. CBC News' chief correspondent plays the Toronto mayor's aide.

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BOSSY

Fey was a mean girl

Ned Ehrbar
Metro | Hollywood

Watching Mean Girls you might think Tina Fey became an expert in mean girl behaviour by being on the receiving end of it. But you would be wrong. It turns out that Fey herself was a mean girl. Can you believe it?

"I admit it openly," she tells the Edit.

"That was a disease that had to be conquered. It's a bad coping mechanism, but when you feel less than — in high school, everyone feels less than everyone else for different reasons — in your mind it's a way of levelling the playing field. Though of course it's not. Saying something terrible about someone else does not actually level the playing field. If I meet a girl of 14 or 15 today who is that kind of girl, I am secretly, in my body, afraid. Even though I'm 45."

She seems to be contrite, but still, this feels like a betrayal, honestly.

LOVE GAME

Tyga Instagram rumours

Kylie Jenner is reportedly peeved at on-again, off-again rapper boyfriend Tyga after catching him swapping texts with a female Instagram user. Yikes.

And she did not take the revelation well, according to OK! Magazine.

"He broke down in tears and begged Kylie to tell him the truth about where they stand. Because he has no idea," a source says. "In the space of a week she's dumped him, got back with him, told the world they're getting married and then decided to 'cool things off' and threw him out of her house. He's really, really scared because she totally funds him and he needs the cash bad. Some of his friends, including Blac Chyna, are convinced he's being toyed with for storylines on the show. He's in a whole world of paranoia right now, especially after hearing that her mom wants him out and has been showing her pictures of other guys to date."

Oh right, Kris Kardashian is involved, so this is going to get superclassy.

NED EHRBAR/METRO HOLLYWOOD

GOSSIP BRIEFS

Adele is a quitter
Adele is really proud of herself for no longer setting fire to the tobacco — and with good reason — but it turns out she was eager to make the change because of some rather extreme fears.

"If I'd carried on smoking, I'd probably have died from a smoking-related illness, and I think that's really bad," she tells the Mirror. "If I was dying from lung cancer, I would have potentially given it to myself, and that wouldn't be something I'd be proud of." I mean, firm but fair.

And last month, in Rolling Stone she reiterated, "I absolutely loved (smoking), but it's not that f—king cool when I'm dying from a smoking-related illness and my kid is, like, devastated." We get it, Adele. We get it. NED EHRBAR/METRO

Rose says ass real
Amber Rose hears all that noise you're making about photos of her in tights that hint at some padding on her infamous rear.

"LOL, I am not wearing booty pads! Damn, y'all all in my ass

doe," she wrote on Instagram. "It's a full-body trainer that has thick lining in it for women's problem areas. I wear it when I work out and it keeps my skin tight and makes me sweat more. I would tell y'all where I got it but I'm making my own MUVA, one for u ladies to enjoy. You know I look out for my girls. Stay tuned." NED EHRBAR/METRO

metro SPORTS

Sidney Crosby is dealing with a lower-body injury and could miss Pittsburgh's game Monday night against Columbus

Miller cramps up in Canucks' shootout loss

NHL

Vancouver ends 6-game road trip Tuesday in T.B.

Cam Tucker
Metro | Vancouver

Jacob Markstrom sat on the bench for 65 minutes of hockey before being suddenly summoned into action to relieve a hurt Ryan Miller against the Florida Panthers on Sunday.

Miller came out of the game in discomfort after Florida's first shootout attempt — a goal from Brandon Pirri — leaving Markstrom to come off the bench completely cold and into the deciding skills competition.

Markstrom made one save on Jonathan Huberdeau, the first shooter he faced, but couldn't stop Aleksander Barkov in the third round, as the Panthers defeated the visiting Canucks by a final score of 5-4.

The Canucks have now lost four times on this six-game road trip, which ends Tuesday against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

But the sight of Miller prematurely leaving the ice surface appeared to have the makings of a dire situation brewing for the Canucks, who temporarily moved back into a playoff spot in the Pacific Division with the single point despite their ongoing struggles since early November.

However, via the team's Twitter account, head coach Willie Desjardins said the 35-year-old Miller cramped up but otherwise should be fine.

Whether that means he'll play in Tampa Bay is still to be determined.

Vancouver has one game remaining before it goes into the holiday break, which would provide Miller with a brief but important rest period.

Canucks goalie Ryan Miller dives to make a save against Panthers forward Jonathan Huberdeau. JOEL AUERBACH/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SUNDAY **In Sunrise, Fla.**

5	4
PANTHERS	CANUCKS

Beset by injuries to Henrik Sedin and defenceman Dan Hamhuis, the Canucks have actually managed to score seven goals in their last two games. But they've also been unable to shut down the opposition.

Sunday's game was a high-scoring contest through the first two periods. The Canucks and Panthers combined for eight goals with defence appearing completely optional at some points.

The Panthers scored twice on the power play, which proved to be costly to the Canucks. Florida's Jaromir Jagr moved into sole possession of fourth all-time in goals with 732 throughout his illustrious career.

Vancouver's penalty kill was twice victimized because of its mistakes — leaving the 43-year-old Jagr wide open in front of the net in the first period being the most egregious.

Mathew Barzal of Coquitlam plays his junior hockey for the Seattle Thunderbirds.
MARISSA BAECKER/GETTY IMAGES

WORLD JUNIORS

Virtanen, Barzal make the cut for Canada

Vancouver Canucks forward Jake Virtanen and Coquitlam's Mathew Barzal were officially named to Canada's world junior hockey championship roster on Sunday.

Virtanen, 19, had one goal and four points in 19 games with the Canucks this season before being released to the selection camp. The New Westminster native was part of Canada's gold-medal winning team at the 2015 tournament.

A total of 13 forwards made the final cut. Barzal, an 18-year-old first-round pick of the New York Islanders, was among them.

Montreal Canadiens draft pick Noah Juulsen was among the final four cuts made by Hockey Canada. Jeremy Lauzon of the QMJHL's Rouyn-Noranda Huskies was the other defenceman cut.

Jayce Hawryluk of the WHL's Brandon Wheat Kings and Nick Merkley of the Kelowna Rockets were also released by the team.

"We had a really good evaluation period in Toronto and Imatra, and were able to see how the players responded to different situations — from practices to games," said Scott Salmond, VP of hockey operations and national teams for Hockey Canada.

Jake Virtanen
GETTY IMAGES FILE

"These are never easy decisions, but we feel confident in the team we have and their ability to make the nation proud."

The Canadian roster features three goaltenders, including Calgary Flames draft pick Mason McDonald, MacKenzie Blackwood of the OHL's Barrie Colts and Samuel Montembeault.

Joining Virtanen as a returning player from last year are defenceman Joe Hicketts and forwards Lawson Crouse and Brayden Point.

Team Canada opens the tournament against the U.S. on Boxing Day in Helsinki, Finland.

CAM TUCKER/METRO
WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

WHL

Giants enter break on a roll

After enduring a horrendous stretch in October and November, the Vancouver Giants have managed to get back into the hunt for a playoff spot in the Western Hockey League's Western Conference.

The Giants go into the Christmas break of their schedule with wins in three of their last four games, and seven of a possible eight points following a 2-1 victory over the Everett Silvertips on Saturday. Tyler Benson, Vancouver's potential first-round pick in the 2016 NHL Draft, scored the winner.

Despite packaging together some wins — six in their last 10 games — the Giants are still last in the conference. But they're now only four points back of the Portland Winterhawks for the final playoff spot.

Considering how the Giants were trending even less than a month ago, their current situation could've been far worse than being four points out of a playoff spot at the break.

Prior to Nov. 28, when the results started going Vancouver's way, the Giants had lost 10 of 11 games in November.

They also had only two wins in the entire month of October. And it appeared yet another season was quickly spiralling beyond control of anyone in the organization and would be lost.

Now it appears this season isn't beyond saving.

The Giants resume their schedule on Sunday against the Silvertips at Pacific Coliseum.

CAM TUCKER/METRO

TEAM SCORING

The Giants' top 10 scorers:

	G	A	Pts
Chase Lang	12	20	32
Ty Ronning	20	9	29
Trevor Cox	6	22	28
Tyler Benson	8	17	25
Carter Popoff	9	13	22
Alec Baer	10	11	21
Matt Barberis	5	13	18
Brennan Menell	2	15	17
Radovan Bondra	7	9	16
Ben Thomas	3	12	15

IN BRIEF

Canadian women's soccer team beaten by Brazil

Janine Beckie scored the first goal, but host Brazil responded with three of its own, including two from Monica, for a 3-1 victory over Canada on Sunday in the final of the international women's soccer tournament in Natal.

Monica's first goal of the game, on a header off a corner kick in the 63rd minute, stood as the winner as Brazil remained undefeated in the four-team tournament. Canada finished second after going 2-1 in group play. The Canadians' only other loss of the tournament was against Brazil in the final game of the preliminary round. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Irving makes season debut as Cavs rout 76ers

Kyrie Irving scored 12 points and played 18 minutes in his season debut and LeBron James had 23, leading the Cleveland Cavaliers to a 108-86 victory Sunday over the Philadelphia 76ers, who lost their 10th straight and fell to 1-28.

Irving was on the floor for the first time since breaking his left kneecap in Game 1 of the NBA Finals against Golden State. The Cavs managed without him, going 17-7 to start the season. The Cavs improved to 12-1 at home and are eyeing a Christmas Day game against the Warriors. James didn't play in the fourth quarter, logging a season-low 26 minutes. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seahawks dash into playoffs

NFL

Beating Browns helps Seattle to 4th postseason in a row

Russell Wilson, Doug Baldwin and the Seattle Seahawks are headed to the playoffs for the fourth straight season, thanks to an offence that can't be stopped lately. Wilson threw three touchdown passes, two to Baldwin, and the Seahawks clinched a playoff spot with a 30-13 win over the Cleveland Browns on Sunday.

Again, it was largely behind the play of Wilson, who put together another elite performance in a week where Cleveland coach Mike Pettine stirred debate by saying Wilson wasn't in the top tier of NFL quarterbacks.

Wilson completed 21 of 30 passes for 249 yards and became the first quarterback with three or more TD passes and no interceptions in five straight games, although he was nearly picked off at the goal line by Tramon Williams in the closing minutes.

Right behind Wilson in the record book was Baldwin, thanks to his touchdown catches of 6 and 3 yards. Baldwin joined Jerry Rice as the only wide receivers to have 10 touchdown catches in a four-game span in the same season. Rice had 10 TD catches from a combo of Joe Montana and Steve Young during the 1987 season. Baldwin has grabbed all 10 from Wilson.

Baldwin also became the third wide receiver since 1960 with four straight games with multiple TD catches, joining Calvin Johnson in 2011 and Cris Carter in 1995. He also matched Daryl Turner's single-season franchise record of 13 TD catches.

Tyler Lockett added a 27-yard touchdown catch on the first play of the fourth quarter to give Seattle a 27-10 lead and, while Baldwin was setting records, Jermaine Kearse had the best regular-season game of his career with seven catches for 110 yards.

Coming off arguably the best game of his young career, Cleveland quarterback Johnny Manziel didn't make any critical mistakes, but only got the Browns into the end zone once. Manziel was 19 of 32 for 161 yards and was intercepted by Marcus Burley with 2:06 remaining trying to force a throw downfield.

Manziel wasn't fazed initially by making his debut in the loudest venue in the NFL. Manziel mostly silenced the 12th Man on Cleveland's first drive, leading the Browns on a 15-play march converting four third downs and hitting Barnidge on a 7-yard TD strike. It was the first touchdown drive allowed by the Seahawks defence since the fourth quarter of their win over Pittsburgh, a span of 21 possessions. Seattle started with a committee trying to replace the absences of Marshawn Lynch and Thomas Rawls at running back. Derrick Coleman got the first carry, Bryce Brown got a handful of looks, but it was Christine Michael who shined, rushing for 84 yards.

But it was the arm of Wilson that made the difference, hitting Baldwin on a pair of TD throws on consecutive drives in the first half to take a 14-7 lead.

Seattle got a gift at the end of the first half when Wilson hit Kearse for 39 yards on the final play, but Williams was flagged for facemask on Kearse as he tried to get extra yards. The flag extended the half for one play and Steven Hauschka hit the second of his three field goals. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seattle wide receiver Doug Baldwin scores a touchdown during the first half against the Cleveland Browns at CenturyLink Field on Sunday in Seattle. STEPHEN BRASHEAR/GETTY IMAGES

SUNDAY in Seattle

SEAHAWKS	BROWNS
30	13

PANTHERS

Cam Newton stayed away from the nastiness around him, shrugged off a record-tying Giants comeback and did what he does best: carry Carolina to victory.

In a wild game that saw New York tie the score after trailing by 28 points, Newton threw five touchdown passes for the third time in five weeks. The Panthers remained perfect by outlasting the Giants 38-35 Sunday on Graham Gano's 43-yard field goal as time expired. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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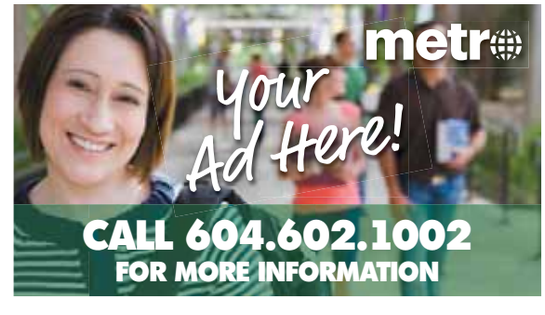


RECIPE Chickpea and Spinach Stew

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

Celebrate Meatless Monday with this Spanish-style stew. It will taste even better as leftovers for tomorrow's lunch.

Ready in
Prep time: 30 minutes
Serves 6

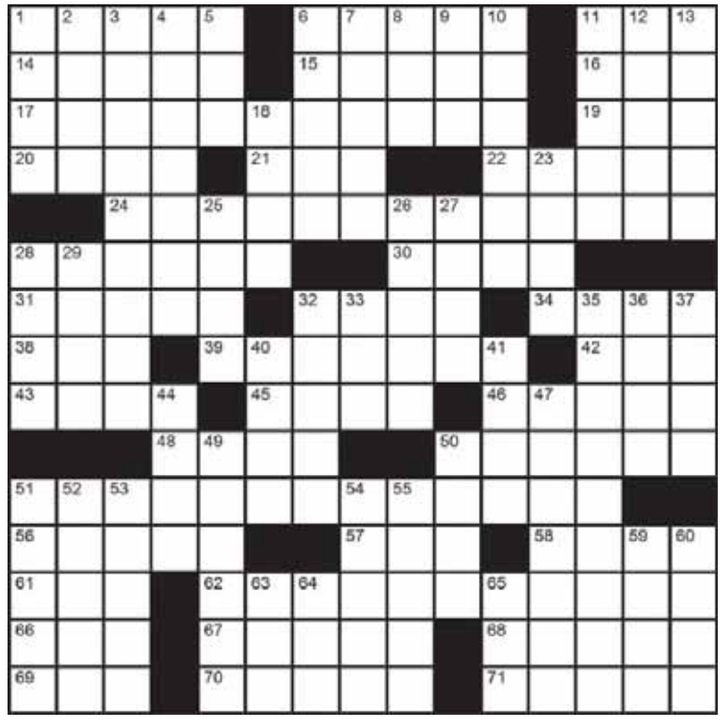
Ingredients
- 2 onions, chopped
- 2 to 3 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 3-inch piece of ginger, grated or minced
- 4 cloves of garlic, minced
- 2 or 3 big handfuls of baby spinach, washed and stems trimmed
- 2 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1/2 tsp ground coriander
- 1/2 tsp cayenne (optional)
- 1 x 28 oz can tomatoes
- 1 x 28 oz can of chickpeas
- 1 cup water
- Pinch of salt

Directions
1. Sauté onions and pinch of salt in oil until they are quite soft, about 10 minutes. Add ginger and garlic and stir for about a minute or two. Add spices and cook for another minute.
2. Add chickpeas and tomatoes. Use the back of a spoon to break up the tomatoes. Add the water and bring to a boil. Add the spinach, reduce heat and simmer for about 15 minutes.
3. Serve over rice and put a dollop of plain yogurt on top.

FOR MORE MEAL IDEAS, VISIT SWEETPOTATOCHRONICLES.COM

CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Robert Redford's "The Natural" (1984) role, Roy __
6. Ms. Abdul
11. Letter-writer's li'l afterthoughts
14. Veggie burger slice
15. "The table __ __!" (Suppertime exclamation)
16. Li'l round rate
17. Ebenezer Scrooge employee: 2 wds.
19. Three vowels
20. Heraldic border
21. Phantom's scare!
22. Edmonton office building, __ Tower
24. Book lover's Christmas decoration: 4 wds.
28. Ms. Tisdale
30. Calgary's prov.
31. Gladiator's 153
32. Lemony
34. Recipe amt.
38. Mr. Bachman
39. Most close by
42. Him, in Hull
43. Arctic birds, Snowy __
45. Very, in Verdun
46. Chicago's airport
48. River of Spain
50. Food store merchant
51. Wildlife in Canada... SARA = __ __ __ Act
56. Christmas song
57. __ Lanka
58. SNL and NASA , e.g.
61. Large truck
62. French log-shaped Christmas dessert: 3 mots
66. Bitty British band
67. Ice Cube, aka __ Jackson
68. When it will be five months from December: 2 wds.
69. East: French
70. Festive fellow, __ Nick
71. __-toothed tiger

DOWN
1. Freight train rider
2. __ about (Circa): 2 wds.
3. Nova Scotia village with a religious sounding name: 2 wds.
4. Celine Dion's "The Prayer" duettist Andrea
5. Grad-to-be, briefly
6. Mountaineer's spike
7. Tie type
8. Show-to-seats, shortly
9. Hawaii garland
10. Certify
11. Cost
12. Sewing kit item
13. Cartoon creature of blue
18. "About _ __" (2002) starring Hugh Grant
23. Fantastic, in slang
25. Sinn __ (Irish republican party)
26. Arctic __ (Northern-hopping critters)
27. Singer/pianist Mr. John's, for short
28. X-__ knife
29. Cabbage dish
32. Tropical tubers
33. "We Three Kings of Orient __"
35. British Columbia ski resort, Whistler __
36. Certain
37. __ 1 Imports
40. Raison d'__
41. Ms. Kelly of song
44. Like dry Spanish wine
47. "Gloria, __ in excelsis!": Latin bit of Christmas song "Ding Dong Merrily on High"
49. The Hobbit character Mr. Baggins, and namesakes
50. Solvers jot down answers to clues in the Crossword's what?
51. Loose rock at a cliff's base
52. Buckets
53. Grain fungus
54. Greyish
55. Special snack
59. Bring up
60. Leonard __, Roy Rogers' birth name
63. Canada's neighbour, commonly
64. Vital life energy
65. '_' __ for Eggnog

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS by Sally Brompton

Aries March 21 - April 20
It's a good time of year for you but it could be great if you stop worrying about what might go wrong and give yourself over to having a fun. Remember that definitions of a good time vary from person to person.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
If someone avoids giving you a straight answer to a perfectly straightforward question, then be on your guard. Take whatever moves are necessary to protect yourself.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
Be open about your feelings. Let those who care about you know you care about them too. You can make it hard for loved ones to know what is going on in your heart or your head.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
Don't overlook details that may seem minor now but could be of major significance later on. Even the smallest of causes can result in major consequences.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Forget about any setbacks you may have suffered and start looking forward to a time when everything will go right for you again — it won't be long in coming.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
If you get the chance to prove your critics wrong this week then take it but don't let it consume your every waking thought. Life is much too short to waste time arguing with negative people.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Go where you want to go and do want you want to do this week. No one is going to stop you. You've just got to be free.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Your view of reality seems to be a bit distorted and that could cause problems if you let the line between fact and fantasy get blurred. Be extra careful where money matters are concerned.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
You have come through a lot in recent weeks but now you can look back and see there were reasons for everything that happened. Put doubts and fears behind you and act as if all things are possible.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You want to be left alone with your thoughts. Make sure those you live and work with know you need space. If they are not prepared to give it to you then get up and go elsewhere.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
If you are at a loss as to what to do with yourself, get together with some friends and get involved in an activity that means something to you all. Now is the time for group activities of all kinds but especially those which help other people.

Pisces Feb. 20 - March 20
Give your status and reputation some thought now. With a little bit of effort, you can move up in the world rapidly.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

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FRIDAY'S ANSWERS

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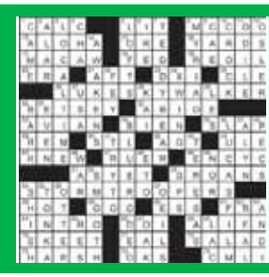

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